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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 002013

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SUBJECT: KOFI ANNAN VISITS ITALY TO TALK AFGHANISTAN, IRAN,
AFRICA, UNSC REFORM

REF: ROME 1967

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor David D. Pearce for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

11. Summary. (C) UN Secretary General Kofi Annan visited Rome July 11-12 for meetings with Italian President Giorgio Napolitano, PM Romano Prodi, FM Massimo D'Alema, President of the Senate Franco Marini, President of the Chamber of Deputies Fausto Bertinotti, and center-right leader Silvio Berlusconi. He also spoke to an informal joint session of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies Foreign Affairs Committees. While, according to the MFA, Annan's meeting with Napolitano and dinner with D'Alema were not substantive, he covered a range of topics with Prodi. Assistant Diplomatic Advisor to the Prime Minister Marco Carnelos said Prodi and Annan discussed Afghanistan, the situation in the Middle East, Iran, UNSC reform, Darfur, China's presence in Africa, and Italy-based UN efforts like the logistics base in Brindisi and UN Staff College in Turin. Prodi and Annan held a joint press conference after their lunch in which the UNSYG praised Italy as a model UN member country. End Summary.

Afghanistan

12. (C) Commenting to Prodi "when I read the papers today, it was all Afghanistan--I thought I was in Kabul," the UNSYG asked Italy what its commitment was in Afghanistan, and when it would be on the table. Prodi assured Annan Italy would continue its engagement in Afghanistan, was committed to staying, and would not change anything about its presence. Carnelos said, contrary to news reports, that Annan had not asked Italy to do more in Afghanistan. To the press, Annan called the presence of NATO and Italian troops in Afghanistan "fundamental."

Middle East, Iran

13. (C) Prodi and Annan tried to reach Israeli PM Ehud Olmert twice during their meeting, to jointly share their concern over the situation in the Middle East, but were unable to get through. They agreed, according to Carnelos, to do their best to help defuse the situation. The conversation on Iran focused primarily on Prodi's report of his conversation with

Iranian Negotiator Ali Larijani two days before (ref).

UNSC Reform

¶4. (C) Cernelos reported Prodi and Annan had a tete-a-tete on UNSC reform, with Annan presenting a plan for expansion that was not clear to the GOI. The proposal, which would provide for new semi-permanent seats, and regional rotation, seemed like permanent seats disguised as "semi-permanent," according to Cernelos. He noted that Italy would not object to real semi-permanent regional rotation, but that he did not think this would be the outcome of the UNSYG's proposal.

Darfur, China in Africa

¶5. (C) On Darfur, Cernelos noted Annan was pessimistic about the possibility that the rebel factions who had not yet signed on to the Darfur Peace Agreement would eventually do so. Annan also expressed concern about China's large-scale importation of raw materials from Africa. According to Cernelos, Annan thought the influx of money was not being put to good use, like building infrastructure. He proposed the possibility of a U.S.-European initiative with Africa and China to try to promote better investment of Chinese cash.

Comments to the Press

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¶6. (U) In comments to the press after lunch, Annan called for Iran to give a signal of its position on the P5 1 proposal and international solidarity and cooperation in Afghanistan. He also praised both Italy's involvement in Afghanistan, and its presence within the UN in general, calling it a "model country" for its heavy involvement. Prodi reinforced and confirmed Italy's support of the UN and multilateralism. He also affirmed Italy's commitment to the struggle against terrorism, and to development.
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